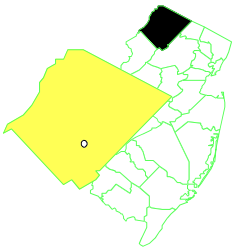
A.O. POLYMER
NEW JERSEY
EPA ID# NJD030253355



EPA REGION 2
CONGRESSIONAL DIST. 11
Sussex County

Site Description

The 4-acre A.O. Polymer site produced resins, plastics, paper coatings, and specialty polymers from the early 1960s until 1993. Operators at the site were also involved in the reclamation of spent solvents. The site has been the focus of concern from local residents and regulatory authorities since the 1970s when citizens noticed odors in well water and the air. In 1978, the Sparta Health Department and the State found volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in three domestic water wells. During the operation of the facility, the State cited the operator twice for improperly discharging plant wastewater and thirteen times for air quality violations. Unlined disposal pits and hundreds of leaking and deteriorated drums were discovered at the site. A plume of contaminated groundwater has migrated to Wallkill River, which is located 1/4 mile from the site. Approximately 1,000 people live in the surrounding area. The site threatens the Allentown aquifer, a source of potable groundwater, that supplies drinking water to over 5,000 people.

Site Responsibility: This site is being addressed through Federal and State actions, and potentially responsible party actions.

NPL LISTING HISTORY
Proposed Date: 12/01/82
Final Date: 09/01/83

Threats and Contaminants

Prior to cleanup, soil beneath the disposal pit area was contaminated with VOCs, which acted as a source of groundwater. All wells have been closed in the contaminated portion of the aquifer, and local residents and businesses have been placed on the municipal water supply.

Cleanup Approach

This site is being addressed in two phases: long-term remedial actions that are focused on the soils beneath the former disposal pit area and the resulting groundwater contamination; and short-term removal actions dealing with the facility area of the site.

Response Action Status

Short-Term Removal Actions: In 1981, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection removed the contents of the disposal pits and disposed of them off site. In 1993, manufacturing operations ceased at the site. The site was abandoned by its owner in 1994 leaving behind unsecured hazardous waste. In April 1994, EPA initiated a removal action to address immediate environmental hazards posed by the abandoned facility. In addition, EPA performed a separate removal action to address hazardous materials stockpiled by the site owner on an adjoining property.

Long-Term Remedial Actions: As part of the long-term remedial phase, studies were conducted that revealed widespread groundwater contamination. The source of groundwater contamination was traced to soils located beneath the former disposal pit area. Final cleanup strategies, selected by EPA in 1991, included soil vapor extraction (SVE) to remove soil contaminants, and pumping and treating contaminated groundwater by air stripping. In the Spring of 1992, EPA ordered the potentially responsible parties to conduct the remedial design and construction. The SVE system has been operating since 1995. The groundwater pump and treatment system began operating in August 1998.

Cleanup Progress (Threat Mitigated by Physical Cleanup)

During the 1981 removal action, 1,970 cubic yards (3,152 tons) of contaminated soils, 900 drums, and 120 cubic yards of debris were removed from the disposal pit area. While pursuing long-term remedial response actions to address the threat posed by contaminated soils located beneath the disposal pits, a more immediate threat developed when the site owner abandoned the property. Removal actions were taken by EPA to address the health threats posed by the unsecured hazardous waste in the abandoned buildings and tanks as well as hazardous materials stockpiled on an adjoining property. Under these immediate actions, EPA removed over 33 tons of hazardous waste, 95 drums of solid waste, 61 cubic yards of asbestos material and 53 cubic yards of contaminated soil.

Among the long-term remedial actions, a SVE system has been constructed (1994) to remove contaminants from the soils located beneath the former waste lagoons. The SVE system has removed 43,000 pounds of VOCs from this area that is contaminated with an estimated 50,000 pounds of VOCs. The soil beneath the former disposal pits is the source of the groundwater contamination. The groundwater pumping and treatment system has removed 16.5 million gallons of contaminated groundwater and 13,000 pounds of solvent have been captured. All planned construction has been completed. In 2002, EPA plans to propose the deletion of a portion of the site, the "Facility Area", from the NPL.